

A BRIEF
ACCOUNT
OF THE
VAUDOIS,

His Sardinian Majesty's
PROTESTANT SUBJECTS
In the Valleys of PIEDMONT.

IN A
LETTER

From a Gentleman on his Travels in Italy.

L O N D O N:

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A BRIEF
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VAUDOIS, &c.

S I R,

Verona, Novr. 25, 1752.

W H E N you were pleased to make
some Enquiry concerning the *Vau-*
dois, you found me very willing
to satisfy your Curiosity; for I had
spent more Time in *Piedmont* than the ge-
nerality of Travellers, and employed part of
it in visiting the Protestant Valleys. To have
given you barely an Idea of what they are
now, would prove, as I imagined, the bu-
siness of a short Letter; but when I came
to acquit myself of my Promise, their pre-

sent and their former State appeared to be so much connected, that it would have been difficult to separate them. This will serve as an Excuse for my offering to your View some Objects, with which you are, no doubt, very well acquainted. You will here see a Sketch of a People inclosed within a small District, of no Consequence in themselves, and who, it is to be thought, would have been confounded and lost in the general History of the Country they inhabit; but that they are become distinguished and memorable, by some noble Struggles for the Liberties of Conscience, and the uninterrupted Profession of their Religion. It is this perpetuity Protestant Writers have so much insisted upon, and the *Roman* Catholicks taken such pains to invalidate, both conceiving it of the utmost importance to the support of their several Causes. But such a Controversy, I have neither Books, nor Leisure, nor Inclination, to engage in.

The People who inhabited the Avenues to the *Alps*, and the *Slopes*, which for some extent border *France* and *Italy*, were named *Valdenses*, *Vaudois*, from the old *French* Word *Val*, *Vaux*, a Valley. Thus the unequal Country, terminated by the
Lake

Lake of Geneva, is called *Paijs de Vaux*. What at first was only the Name of their Habitation and Retreat, became since, that of their Sect. In the *Low Countries* they were called *Wallons*; in the greater part of *Europe*, *Vaudois*; in *Italy* only, *Fraticelli*.

It is certain that they derive neither their Name nor their Sentiments from *Valdo*, but are of much greater Antiquity. They had embraced the Christian Religion in its first purity; their Situation and little Intercourse with other Nations were the means of preserving it so long unmixed. There is great reason to think, that having never been firmly attached to the Church of *Rome*, they abandoned it intirely under *Claude*, Archbishop of *Turin*, at a time when several Innovations were introducing. This Prelate was cotemporary with *Charlemain*, and *Lewis the Pious*, and bound to both by a personal Friendship. Towards the end of the eighth Century, and at the beginning of the ninth, his Doctrine had made great progress throughout all *Italy*. He attacked very severely, both in his Writings, and his Discourses, the Adoration of Saints, Pilgrimages, the Pope's Supremacy, &c.

† It is oftner wrote *Paijs de Vand*.

His Sentiments, by the confession of several Authors of the *Roman Church*, differed little from those which made their appearance at the Reformation.

It was from these People, that *Peter Valdo* of *Lyons*, who separated from the Church of *Rome* about the middle of the twelfth Century, received his Opinions. They were soon spread through many parts of *Europe*, when himself and his Followers were excommunicated by Pope *Alexander the Third*, at the Instigation of *Jean de Belle Maison*, Archbishop of *Lyons*. The *English*, who were in possession of *Guienne*, imbibed the same Sentiments from the Neighbours of *Albi*, the *Albigensis*; in this manner they reached *Wicklef*, and were received in *Bobemia* by one of his Scholars, who carried thither a Book of his Master's writing.

The first ² Persecution had driven many of *Valdo's* Sect into the *Alps*, and among the *Vaudois*; within forty Years after they had spread considerably all over *Lombardy*, and established many Societies: but still the Valleys were overloaded with Inhabitants, till at the beginning of the fourteenth Century, they obtained certain

² About the Year 1180.

Privileges under *Robert King of Sicily*, and sent some very numerous Colonies to occupy waste Lands in *Apulia* and *Calabria*. The Proprietors, who reaped so much Benefit from their Industry, gave them no Molestation on account of their private Opinions. ³ Till *Pascal*, a *Piedmontese*, having, after the Example of his Brethren in the Valleys, preached with more Fervour and Openness than usual, was imprisoned by the Marquis *Spinelli*, and executed at *Rome*. It was this engaged Pope *Pius* the Fourth to raise a violent Persecution against them: they were cruelly tortured and put to death all over *Calabria*; those in *Apulia*, and the other Provinces of the Kingdom of *Naples*, either tamely submitted to a change of Religion, or withdrew.

It is very remarkable, that at this time, if their Accounts are to be credited, the number of Reformed in the States of the Duke of *Savoy*, amounted to above a million of Souls. The Prince himself resided at *Nice*, the *French*, after a long ⁴ War of Twenty-three Years, remained still, for some time after the Peace, in possession of *Turin*, *Quiers*, *Villa nova d'Asti*, *Pignerol*,

³ About 1560.

⁴ Under *Francis* the First, and *Henry* the Second.

and *Chivas*, in all which Towns there were both *French* and *Italian* Congregations, with their Ministers.

A distinct Account of the Persecutions of the *Vaudois* in *Piedmont*, would present a Scene of Detestation and Horror! in which a little Prince, openly abetted by the Church of *Rome*, would be seen to act sometimes by Principles of Interest, sometimes by those of Fear; employing all the Arts of Insinuation, of Fraud, of Perfidy, and of Cruelty; whilst a poor People, simple and unrefined in their Manners, whose Attachment to their Religion would have looked like Obstinacy, had it not proceeded from conviction, were, with the utmost bravery, defending their Possessions, and their Lives; often by the Uprightness of their Hearts, falling a Sacrifice, rather to superior Cunning, than to superior Numbers.

It is true, that the *French*, whose favourite Ambition it was to get a footing in *Italy*, treated them with more Humanity: Perhaps it was good Policy to be well with a People who were in some sort Masters of the Passes. And yet the Marquisate of *Saluces* had very near been involved in the famous Massacre of the *St. Barthelmi*. *M. de Biragues*, who was Governor for
Charles

Charles the Ninth, received an Order to put to death a great Number of the most considerable *Vaudois*; he contented himself with securing their Persons, alledging, that they were Men of Honour and Probity, whose Characters had undoubtedly been misrepresented to his Majesty; by the time this Evasion had reached *Paris*, the Court was fatiated with Blood, and they were ordered to be set at liberty.

The seizure of this Marquisate by *Charles Emanuel* during the Troubles in *France*, and the Exchange made afterwards by *Henry* the Fourth, were fatal to the *Vaudois*; who were soon entirely extirpated from every part of it. On the other side, the *French*, who by way of reprisal, had taken possession of the Valleys, engaged in the most formal manner that they should remain inseparably annexed to the Crown of *France*, that the free Exercise of their Religion should be maintained to them, and that if, upon any urgent Necessity, they should ever be ceded to the House of *Savoy*, the same Conditions should be stipulated. But they quickly fell into the Power of their former Master, and were secured to him by the Negotiations which followed the Peace of *Vervins*.

When the Army of *Lewis* the Thirteenth came to the Assistance of the Duke of *Mantua*, they returned once more into the hands of the *French*,; but were soon restored. During this whole space of time, they received more or less Molestation, according to the different Temper of the Court, or the Credit of the Clergy. But in the Year 1655, in spite of the most solemn Engagements, they were suddenly commanded either to change their Religion within four Days, or to quit the most fruitful parts of the Country: Their Refusal was followed by that cruel Persecution which interested all the Protestant States of *Europe* in their favour. *Cromwell* was at their head; he wrote pressing Letters to most of them, and did more than all the rest by his Example and his Influence. Mr. *Morland*, his Commissary, seconded his Zeal at *Turin*. In a *Latin* Speech to *Charles Emanuel*, after a pathetic Description of the Cruelties committed in the Valleys, he expressed himself in the following manner: “ If the *Neros* of all
 “ former Ages were to return into the
 “ World, they would themselves be struck
 “ with Horror! for the Actions of their
 “ whole Lives, compared to these, would
 “ appear gentle and humane: tho’ far be it
 “ from

“from me to reflect on your Royal High-
 “ness, who, I am persuaded, could never
 “have given Countenance to such Bar-
 “barities.”

The Duke of *Savoy*, so much pressed on every side, began to treat with his subjects, who, after a surprising Defence, were driven to the last Extremity. A 6 Treaty was hastily concluded at *Pignerol*, under the Mediation of *France*, and by the Interposition of the *Swiss* Embassy, whose Names were however not suffered to appear in it. Thus the *Vaudois* were partly restored to their Habitations, and to a Liberty of Conscience, under certain Restrictions. At such a time of Distress, any Conditions were acceptable; but they certainly would have proved much more advantageous, had they waited the arrival of Mr. *Downing*, the new *English* Ambassador, who was advanced as far as *Paris*, and had Orders to join Sir ----- *Pell*, Envoy to the *Swiss* Cantons, and Mr. *Morland*, then executing a Commission at *Geneva*. By thus acting in concert for a Master who knew how to make himself respected, they could easily have ballanced the Superiority of M. *de Ser-vent*, the *French* Ambassador.

6 Vid. *Corps Diplomatique*, Tom. 6. Sous l'année 1655.

It is certain that the Court of *France*, from the beginning of the Administration of Cardinal *Richelieu*, was proceeding upon new Principles, and had so much at heart the destruction of the Protestant Party, that they could hardly wish well to the *Vaudois*, who might easily communicate with those of their own Persuasion in the adjoining 7 Valleys of *Dauphiné*. To confirm this Suspicion, it happened that *Pignerol* and the Valley of *St. Martin*, being in their hands, they had obtained leave of the Duke of *Savoy* for five Regiments to take up Winter-Quarters in the Valley of *Lucerne*; and these very Troops were assistant in all the Cruelties that were committed.

The *Dutch*, the *Swiss*, and the *Germans*, had relieved the *Vaudois* by Benefactions; but perhaps there is no Instance in History of any Nation interposing so warmly for another, as the *English* did at this time for a poor People, removed from them at an immense distance, in an inland Country, and connected by no Reasons of Policy or Interest. It will stand recorded as an eternal Monument of their Humanity, that after so much Money ⁸ remitted to serve their urgent Ne-

⁷ They were three: *Trossinure*, *Val-Louise*, and *Val-Cluson*.

⁸ The Collections in *England* amounted to Thirty-eight Thousand Ninety-seven Pounds Seven Shillings and Three-pence.

cessities,

cessities, there still remained out of the Collections a Sum of 16,000 *l.* for 12,000 of which the Revenue was to stand charged at an annual Interest of 614 *l.* *Charles* the Second, who had as little Compassion and Generosity as Zeal for the Protestant Cause, after the Restoration, refused to confirm this Act of an Usurper; and the whole, excepting a small Sum remaining in the Hands of a Banker, was lost.

The Professions of *Cromwell* were certainly sincere, he even made an Offer of disposing of them in *Ireland*; the Reason they gave for their Refusal, was, "that Religion in general would suffer by their Removal, and that they thought it not lawful to desert the dangerous Post in which Providence had placed them." Perhaps the settling of some *Irish Roman* Catholicks, in the most fruitful Parts of the Valley of *Lucerne*, might have given room for this Proposal; but they had acted a cruel Part, and were all cut to Pieces in the Course of the War. It had indeed been given at *Rome*, as an Excuse for the Persecution in *Piedmont*, that it was a proper Reprisal for the Violences committed by *Cromwell* in *Ireland*.

The Treaty of *Pignerol*, not more durable than the former Edicts, was soon infringed in almost all its Articles, and the
Vau-

Vaudois reduced to the Necessity of taking up Arms. After a brave Defence, and much Blood-shed, they applied as before, to the Protestant Powers. All they could obtain from *Charles* the Second, was a Letter in their Favour; and in 1664, they made their Peace still upon worse Conditions.

And yet the most fatal Blow they received was, at the Revocation of the 9 Edict of *Nants*. Till that time, in their several Distresses, they were supplied by their Protestant Neighbours with Money, Ammunition, and personal Assistance; but they were now to be deprived not only of these, but even of their last Resource, the Liberty of withdrawing their Persons into Places of Security, by passing the Mountains.

It is hard to say which were treated with most Cruelty, the Protestants of *France*, or those of *Piedmont*, in the Violence used to rob them of their Religious Liberties. The one pleaded a solemn Contract, in its nature irrevocable, and by which all the Orders of the State were obliged to their Protection. The others urged prior Possession, their great Antiquity and long Prescription, confirmed by various Compacts and Concessions, which

gave them Rights much superior to those of a Toleration.

King *William* ¹ afterwards obtained something in their Favour, from his Ally *Victor Amadeus*. From that Time the *English* Nation is become Guarantee to their Liberties, and has not only relieved them often by Charities, but interposed to procure a Redress of their Grievances. The last ² Edict, was made towards the End of King *Victor's* Reign, in the Absence of the *English* Minister, and explained away some of their Privileges; a Severity they had little Reason to expect, from a Prince who had thrown himself into their Arms, at a Time when the Enemy was in Possession of almost all his Dominions; and had express'd the highest Sense of their Services, with the strongest Inclination to reward them. The great Steadiness of their present Sovereign, humane as he is, in keeping to the Letter of the Edicts, and in an uncommon Zeal for his Religion, gives them little room to hope for Favours.

It has been the constant Aim of the Court of *Rome*, to root out of *Italy* these little Remains of Herefy. The Princes of the House of *Savoy* have seconded such

¹ In 1694.

² In 1730.

good Designs, with all their Endeavours; they were too much dependent on the Pope, not to have many Favours to obtain, which it was convenient to buy at the Expence of a Party already become so odious: The Losses sustained by their obstinate Defence, have served to increase this Aversion. To which may be added, some political Reasons, and the favourite Maxim, adopted by arbitrary Government, of admitting but one Religion in the State; not to mention the constant Instigation of a whole Order of Men, the Clergy, in *Italy* very considerable both by their Numbers and their Influence.

The States of *Europe* have of late been bound by such mutual Dependences and Connections, that it would be hateful, and even dangerous for a Prince of no very great Power to play the Tyrant with his Subjects. It is perhaps to this happy Situation that the *Vaudois*, little as they are, owe their present Existence. The chief Art used to reduce their Numbers, has been the confining them to certain Limits, beyond which they are not suffered to make any Purchase; nor, even in these, out of the Hands of *Roman* Catholicks; who are constantly encouraged to extend themselves in their Possessions. The
Valley

Valley of *Pragelas*, so long occupied by *French* Protestants, is now inhabited only by *Roman* Catholicks. Those of *Lucerne* and *St. Martin* are mixed, and the Protestants have only a small Part of that of *Perouse*. It is certain, that in the Year 1592. The Proportion between the two Religions, was not of one to a hundred, it is now of one to seven, since the Number of Souls in the Protestant Limits do not much exceed eight Thousand, one Thousand of which are *Roman* Catholicks.

The Valleys are so many Hollows and Avenues to vast Mountains, of some Breadth, at the Entrance of the Plain of *Piedmont*, but insensibly contracting themselves as they advance on the Ascent; and at last just opening a Passage for a Stream, which falls violently through Rocks and Precipices. It is this Situation exposes the Inhabitants to Inundations, upon great Rains, or the sudden melting of Snow. The lower Parts are extremely fruitful, consisting of Arable Land and of Pasture, which may be watered at pleasure, by means of the Current; and the Fields are interspersed with white Mulberry-trees, to feed their Silk-worms; Vines are every where planted on the Sides, but their Industry in this respect, which indeed is, in
C some

some Degree, common to the other Neighbours of the *Alps*, is extremely remarkable; for whenever the Rock is of itself too steep, or too naked to hold a Plant, they carry up the Earth with immense Labour, or rake it from above, supporting the Work all along by little Stone-walls, and thus raising several Stages of narrow Terrasses: In this Manner they produce a Quantity of Wine, in goodness little inferior to any in the King of *Sardinia's* Dominions. The Spots ill exposed for Vineyards, are covered by large Chestnut-trees, and still higher with Groves of various kinds of Fir; which the Hand of Nature has disposed in such just Order, that they would be mistaken for regular Plantations. It is about these Spots that the Cattle feed, in the Summer Months, whilst the Hay and Corn Harvest is gathering in in the Bottoms; into which they are soon after driven, by the Fogs or the Snow in *September*. The Summits are all rocky and barren, producing only some Medicinal Herbs.

And here I cannot help observing, what possibly may have occurred to many other Travellers. I have often considered, what must have been the Consequence, if the *Alps* were strictly, as they shew to a distant

tant Spectator, huge Masses of Matter, heaped up fortuitously, and inaccessible: The Rain congealed in such Abundance on the upper Parts, would then at each Change of Season, roll impetuously down the Rocks, and sweep away all the Gifts of Nature, with the Works of human Industry; whilst the beautiful Vale of *Lombardy*, would become a vast Lake, or a dangerous Morass. But their present Disposition is visibly the Effect of Wisdom and Intelligence; they are separated and broke by continual Cavities: At proper Intervals the greater Valleys interpose, with which many small ones perpetually communicate: And thus those great Bodies of Water, falling on either Side from the *Alps* and the *Appennine*, are received into numberless Channels, form so many Rivers which unite in the *Po*, and after fertilising several States, insensibly lose themselves in the Sea.

It may easily be imagined that Husbandry must be attended with great Labour, in the Situations just described; it were well too if it were not precarious; for so late as the close of the last 3 Year, the Torrents of Water falling from the Mountains, carried away, in the Valley of *Lucerne*, the chief Part of the Grain that

was sown, with many Vineyards and Chestnut-trees: In this Extremity the poorer Sort resolved to leave their Country, and with little Reflection, whole Families retired to *Geneva*, and the Canton of *Berne*; where they expected, by the Appointment of the King of *Prussia*, to be defrased into his Dominions; but they had been misinformed, and were almost all obliged to return home, where the Misery was re-doubled, by the receiving so many Poor, who had just before parted with their little Properties. To add to this Misfortune, the Hail, which is fatal to *Piedmont* above all other Countries in *Europe*, did them incredible Damage the following Spring; they have lately applied for Relief to the *English* and the *Swiss*, but I fear, with little or no Success; and at present above Two Hundred Families are in great Necessity; for the Country not producing Corn enough for their own consumption, the deficiency is supplied by Chestnuts; but should they both fail as well as the Vines, they must inevitably be reduced to the utmost Straights.

The Natives are sober, healthy, and inured to Labour; quickness of Parts, the gift of a milder Climate and more Leisure, is often accompanied with stronger Passions and less degrees

degrees of Honesty. From their youth they are trained up to Fire-Arms, which they manage with such Dexterity, that they are peculiarly qualified for the kind of War to be carried on in Mountains; a Service depending rather on Skill and the Knowledge of the Ground, than on personal Courage. They are not however wanting on this part, of which in the former general War they gave many signal Proofs as often as the *French* attempted to force a Passage thro' their Mountains. In the late War, the whole Valleys raised several Companies, amounting to near Two Thousand Men; Five Hundred of them were employed towards *Genoa*; for it was supposed great Benefit should be reaped from such a Corps in that hilly Country: but they almost all deserted. The *Piedmontese* have hence taken occasion to reproach them with the loss of their ancient Spirit; not considering that they were a mere Militia, with scarcely any Pay, almost all married, and their Families suffering greatly by their Absence. Nor could it be expected, that so far from home they should act with the same Courage as they did formerly in defence, and often in view, of their little Possessions.

The love of their Country, which seizes the *Swiss* by intervals, is with them a constant

stant Principle, acting with its utmost force; but Men of Ingenuity and Talents, are never servily attached to one spot of Ground. Upon this Account, notwithstanding the gradual Loss of some Converts, in a course of Years they must necessarily be overstocked with Inhabitants. Their Poverty is in some measure owing to the disposal of Estates, which in Families are equally divided among the Children; thus the Portions are already become extremely small, and they have set a sufficient Clog upon their Industry by encouraging Husbandry alone, not establishing Manufactures, and scarcely exercising the common manual Arts. It happens too, unfortunately, that the Government under which they live, is not the most favourable to the Subject. The Land of Protestants is near doubly taxed, and their Religion itself exposes them to an additional Expence in the Support of their Churches and Schools, and the Maintenance of their Poor, and their Ministers.

To be made acquainted with the precise Opinions of the *Vaudois*, in the early Ages of Christianity, their Church-Government, and ancient Discipline, would be a Matter of some Importance and much Curiosity; but unhappily for us, the most considerable Monuments of this kind, either perished in the
Flames,

Flames, which so often ravaged their Country, or remain sunk in the Obscurity and Dust of some Monastick Library. Of the few Writings that escaped, the most ancient do not exceed the Year 1100; some of them are to be seen at *Geneva*, the greater Part were deposited in the publick Library of the University of *Cambridge*, by Mr. *Morland*: Perhaps the Book published by that Gentleman, at his Return from *Geneva*, may give some Account of them; at least, Extracts may be seen in Mr. *Leger's* History of the Evangelical Churches in *Piedmont*. They are chiefly in the Provincial, and some few imperfectly written in their own Tongue; a barbarous Jargon differing little from that of the rest of *Piedmont*, which is in general Use, not only among the Populace, but at Court. It would be very difficult to give a Foreigner an Idea of it; for it has Sounds so singular, as not to be reducible to Writing, or expressed by any Letter, or Combination of Letters, in the Alphabet; and tho' the Matter has been judged of Importance, and lately debated in some learned Assemblies, yet it was not thought adviseable to introduce new ones; an Attempt, which History tells us, has not always succeeded with Princes; they are reduced therefore to use *Italian*, which is the Language of the Bar,

Bar, the Pulpit, and all their written Learning. The same Use of the *Italian* prevailed in the Valleys till the Year 1630; the Change was sudden and singular, scarcely to be parallel'd in the Annals of any larger Country: the Plague had just been making great Ravages, and left them but a single Minister. The Loss was irreparable, and they were obliged to sacrifice their Language, to the Necessity of making Recruits among their Neighbours. *France* and *Geneva* furnished them with their Numbers; from that Time the *French* Tongue became familiar to a People, who by their long Intercourse with that Nation, were already no Strangers to it.

The common Appellation of a Minister was anciently *Barbe*, the same as the *Lombard* Word *Barba*, an Uncle. This, with a little Alteration, has been since used as a Term of Reproach, and 3 *Barbet* is become equivalent to *Huguenot* in *France*. These *Barbes* were venerable Men, in great Honour and Authority among the People; for the whole Learning and Ingenuity of the Country centered in them; they were, as occasion served, Divines, Physicians, or Mechanicks. Their Discourses were agreeable to the rest of their Behaviour, Simple, without Refinement or Art, in which the

3 *Un Barbet*, a rough Dog.

Preacher

Preacher himself spake little, but the Scriptures a great deal: As at other Times, the same Scriptures were made to furnish the strongest Invectives against the Errors of the Church of *Rome*, or the licentious Lives of their Clergy. It is not to be doubted, that some of the sharpest Persecutions were the Fruit of this intemperate Zeal: Men will sometimes overlook personal Reflections, but those that fall upon a Body, and strike at their Authority, are always unpardonable. In Physick their Skill consisted in the Application of Simples of known Virtue, and the common Operations of Surgery; their Mechanicks were rude like themselves.

When the ancient Faith had been widely spread by the Concurrence of *Valdo* and his Followers, the Valleys were still looked upon as the Seal of the Mother-Churches, and Youth, destined for the Ministry, sent thither, from *Bohemia* and other distant Countries, as into a Seminary, to be instructed in the Principles of Religion. On their side they were so great Travellers, as often to think it expedient, on that account, to abstain from Marriage; they visited Churches, confirmed them in their Belief, or reconciled their Differences. Their Missions were generally limited to two Years, in which it was usual to proceed with great Secrecy thro' the whole

D

Length

Length of *Italy*, along the *Mediterranean* Coast, and return by the *Adriatick*: At *Genoa*, *Florence*, and *Venice* they had Houses settled for their Reception. There is an Account, of their once assembling in the Valleys, to the Number of a Hundred and Forty; some were eminent for their Learning, others for their great Zeal, Industry, and Piety. ⁴ *Barbe Lollard* wrote a Commentary on the Revelations; his Name is still famous in *English* History; and ⁵ *Petrus Olivetanus* translated the first Bible that had yet appeared complete in the *French* Tongue.

The general Affairs of the Churches in the Valleys were laid before an Annual Synod. Its Members were either Ministers or Elders, deputed from the respective Parishes, and acting as their Representatives, A Moderator presided and collected the Sense of the Assembly; it was he who performed the Rite of Imposition of Hands on those, who, after a strict Examination, were judged worthy of being appointed Ministers, solemnly imploring the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The less material Business was transacted at a Monthly Committee; for which

⁴ He was imprisoned at *London*.

⁵ He was assisted in this Work by *Calvin*, it was printed at *Neufchatel* in 1539. at the Expence of the Valleys.

Purpose, the Valleys were divided into three Districts. Synods at present are held only every two Years, but not without first obtaining Leave from Court, and admitting a *Roman* Catholick Magistrate to watch over their Debates, and assent to their Resolutions. They have thirteen Communities or Parishes, with as many Churches and Ministers, who by the Royal Edicts must necessarily be Natives of the Valleys. *Lausanne* is their usual Place of Education, where their Students are allowed certain Advantages. It is there, to use their own Term, that they are *receiv'd* Ministers. The Clergy are Men of Merit, and of great Diligence in their Profession; but they complain of not being able to support their Families, as their highest Salaries scarcely exceed 35*l.* this is partly paid out of the Annual Sum of 260*l.* settled on them by *Queen Anne*; for the Congregations would absolutely be unequal to such a Weight. They receive a ⁶ Trifle besides from the *Walloon* Synod in *Holland*, for their Schools.

I say nothing of their Faith, which is so agreeable to that of the *Calvinists*. Their publick Worship was anciently almost as simple and free from Ceremonies; at Baptism the Child was sprinkled thrice, and the

⁶ About 70*l.* a Year.

Wafer, (for it supplied the Place of Bread in the Sacrament,) broke the same Number of Times. They pray'd kneeling, but immediately before and after the Sermon, the whole Congregation recollected a certain Form of Prayer, in the utmost Silence and Solemnity. Singing was never practised in their Churches; but they had Hymns composed for their private Devotions. It was a constant Occupation of the *Barbes* to instruct the People, and transcribe Portions of Scripture for their Use, which they would repeat by Memory to a surprising Exactness. At the Reformation they sent 7 Deputies to *Bucer*, *Melanchton*, and *Zuinglius*, sometime after their⁷ Return, a general Assembly was held in the 9 *Val d'Angrogne*, in which it was resolved for the future, to profess their Religion with less reserve; it was then that certain disputed Articles of their Faith were determined; the chief was the Doctrine of Predestination, and the Denial of Free Grace; with some Matters of Practice, as the Obligation of ceasing from Labour on the Sabbath. The Lawfulness of Oaths; &c. They afterwards communicated more freely with the Churches of *France* and *Switzerland*, and after their Example, drew

7 1526. 8. 1532.

9 It was comprehended under the Valley of *Lucerne*.

up Confessions of Faith, and a Body of Regulations and Discipline, in which they remitted something of their ancient Severity: indeed it had been so great, as to discourage some well-disposed Persons from joining them, and to estrange even those of their own Communion. It is inconceivable in how much Subjection and Dependence, the People had been kept, and with what Rigour Irregularities were punished, either by publick Censures or open Penance: Whilst the Ministers were equally subject to the Controul of the Elders. All kind of Games were utterly prohibited, and Dancing, as it is still, thought unpardonable; I have seen one of their ancient Treatises on this Subject, wherein it is methodically proved, that to dance, is literally to transgress every one of the Ten Commandments. The Foreigners, invited to supply the sudden Vacancies, with another Language introduced more Lenity in their Manners and their Discipline, and reduced their whole Form of Worship nearer to the Calvinistical,

In the mixed Communities, the Magistracies and other Offices, are in the Hands of the *Roman* Catholicks, and Protestants have little Favour to expect, when engaged with those of a different Religion; for among themselves they very rarely go to Law,

Law, but refer all their Disputes to the Ministers or other Arbitrers. Their chief Vexation has all along been the Liberty their Princes have reserved of building and endowing Chapels within their Limits, and often adjoining to their very Churches; this has introduced Priests, with all their Attendants. For when the Differences between the Court of *Rome* and that of *Turin* were adjusted, about fourteen Years ago, it was agreed, that the accumulated Incomes of several vacant Benefices should be applied to this Purpose. It happened shortly after, that the Diocese of *Turin* having been judged of too great Extent, they formed out of it a new one, and established a Bishop's Seat at *Pignerol*, situated at the Mouth of the Valleys. The present Bishop, a *Savoyard*, and a Man of Sense, is aware that Conversions are soonest made by Mildness and Insinuation; by this means he has gained over some of the poorer Sort, whose Indolence, or whose Vices tempted them to sell their Religion. The Children of others have been enticed into the *Hospice*, a kind of Work-house lately established; at a Time of Life, in which it is no difficult Matter to draw Children from the Restraint of their Parents: When they were not of Age, which by the Edicts is fixed

fixed in Girls at ten, and Boys at twelve, they were often detained under diverse Pretences, till they were free to choose the Religion in which they had newly been instructed. But upon the whole, the Number of Converts is as yet insignificant.

The Protestants labour under several other Grievances, for Chicane will naturally take Place in such a Mixture, and the weaker Party be the Sufferer; but it is hard for a poor and laborious People to be with-held, under Penalties, from working on the Multitude of Holydays which adorn the *Roman* Calendar; as their Consciences are free from Scruples, it were to be wished those of their Neighbours were not so tender.

After all, this Liberty of Religion, with its specious Name, has insensibly been reduced to a very limited Toleration: For my part, as often as I consider this People, and the Difficulties under which they have struggled, I cannot help thinking that there is something wonderful in their Preservation. In a Country of Superstition so many signal Deliverances would have been ascribed to the martial Spirit of the Virgin, Temples raised on the most conspicuous Rocks, and many a Saint of Heaven, Phantoms of their own Creation, would have been known to

1 Virgini victrici, &c.

have

have interposed in their Favour: But is it not really a Part worthy of Providence, to have used them as Instruments to rescue a great Part of the Christian World from that Excess of Bigotry, the Bane of Religion, and the Disgrace of Human Reason?

I heartily wish this short Account may either satisfy your Curiosity, or answer your Expectation; at least I am well assured, you are not, like the Generality of Readers, to be struck only with great Events; little Objects may have their Merit; and a thinking Man may often reap much Improvement and Use from the History of a small Country; tho' it should appear to be of no manner of Importance in the general System of *Europe*.

I have the Honour to be, with the greatest Truth and Regard,

S I R,

Your most humble and

Obedient Servant,



